

Message Text

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E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, PK, BG
SUBJ: MEETING BETWEEN SHEIKH MUJIBUR RAHMAN AND SHAUKAT HYAT

SUMMARY. SENIOR AND RESPONSIBLE PAK OPPOSITION POLITICAL LEADER REPORTS PROGRESS IN SECRET MEETING WITH MAJIB ON A PROPOSAL INTENDED TO BREAK CURRENT DEADLOCK BETWEEN PAKISTAN AND BANGLADESH. HE SAYS MUJIB INDICATED HE WOULD BE WILLING TO SEND BACK TO PAKISTAN THE LAST 195 POW'S, NOW IN INDIA, WITHOUT INSISTING THEY CONTINUE TO BE HELD FOR TRIAL. IF THIS REPORT IS ACCURATE, THE CHANCES OF IMPORTANT MOVES FOR FURTHER NORMALIZATION IN THE SUBCONTINENT WOULD BE GREATLY ENHANCED. END SUMMARY.

1. SHAUKAT HYAT, COUNCIL MUSLIM LEAGUE, MEMBER OF PAK NATIONAL ASSEMBLY, AND SOMETIME LEADER OF PARLIAMENTARY OPPOSITION, INFORMED DCM SOBER IN FAREWELL MEETING NOVEMBER 27 OF SECRET MEETING WHICH HE HAD IN KUALA LUMPUR ABOUT THREE WEEKS AGO WITH BANGLADESH PRIMIN. SHAUKAT HAD UNDERTAKEN TRIP TO FAR EAST AS REST CURE BUT ALSO WITH INTENTION OF TRYING ARRANGE MEETING WITH MAJIB. FOR LATTER OBJECTIVE HE HAD BHUTTO'S GENERAL BLESSING. MEETING WITH MAJIB WAS ARRANGED WHILE PRIMIN WAS RETURNING TO DACCA FROM OFFICIAL VISIT TO JAPAN. ACCORDING SHAUKAT, HE MET WITH MAJIB FOR OVER AN HOUR CONFIDENTIAL

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AT BANGLADESH EMBASSY IN KUALA LUMPUR, AND FACT OF VISIT HAS REMAINED SECRET SINCE THEN.

2. ACCORDING SHAUKAT, THEY MET AS OLD COLLEAGUES AND

FRIENDS AND THE MEETING WENT OFF WELL. HE FOUND MAJIB IN CONCILIATORY FRAME OF MIND AND LACKING IN BITTERNESS. MAJIB PRAISED BHUTTO FOR HAVING SAVED HIS LIFE IN LAST STAGES OF MUJIB'S IMPRISONMENT HERE. MUJIB DID NOTE GREAT MUTUAL CREDIBILITY GAP BETWEEN PAKISTAN AND BANGLADESH. AS FOR HIS OWN DOMESTIC SITUATION, MUJIB TOLD SHAUKAT HE WAS CONCERNED THAT HIS COLLEAGUES, TAJUDDIN AHMED AND NAJRUL ISLAM, WERE INTENT ON DISPLACING HIM; HE ALSO EXPRESSED SOME CONCERN OVER OPPOSITION ACTIVITIES OF MAULANA BHASHANI.

3. SHAUKAT SAID HE HAD PUT FOUR-POINT PROPOSAL TO MUJIB AS BASIS FOR RECONCILIATION BETWEEN PAKISTAN AND BANGLADESH: (A) BDG SHOULD NOT TRY THE 195 POW'S NOW HELD BY INDIA WHO ARE EARMARKED FOR POSSIBLE TRIAL; THEY SHOULD BE RETURNED TO PAKISTAN WHERE THEY MIGHT BE TRIED BEFORE A COURT OF INTERNATIONAL STANDING. (B) BDG SHOULD RELEASE SOME 40,000 BENGALIERS NOW IN BANGLADESH JAILS AS A RESULT OF 1971 ACTIVITIES IN FAVOR OF PAKISTAN. (C) GOP AND BDG FINANCIAL CLAIMS AGAINST ONE ANOTHER SHOULD BE SUBMITTED TO INTERNATIONAL FIRMS OF ACCOUNTANTS NAMED BY EACH GOVERNMENT. (D) TRADE BETWEEN PAKISTAN AND BANGLADESH SHOULD BE RESUMED.

4. ACCORDING SHAUKAT, MUJIB WAS GENERALLY RECEPTIVE AND WILLING TO MOVE FORWARD TOWARD NORMALIZATION WITH PAKISTAN ALONG ABOVE LINES. AS FOR THE 195 POW'S, MUJIB HAD SAID HE WOULD BE WILLING TO HAVE THEM GO BACK TO PAKISTAN AND IT WAS NOT NECESSARY THAT THEY SHOULD BE PUT ON TRIAL IN PAKISTAN; HE SUGGESTED IT WOULD BE SUFFICIENT IF THEY APOLOGIZED TO BANGLADESH FOR THEIR ACTIONS. ON RELEASE OF BENGALIERS NOW JAILED IN BANGLADESH, ACCORDING SHAUKAT, SOME 20,000 OF THEM HAVE ALREADY BEEN RELEASED SINCE HIS MEETING WITH MUJIB. SHAUKAT THOUGHT MUJIB HAD SOME QUALMS ABOUT SUBMITTING RECIPROCAL FINANCIAL CLAIMS FOR CONFIDENTIAL

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INTERNATIONAL ARBITRATION, PERHAPS ON GROUNDS THAT BDG WOULD NOT COME OUT WELL FROM IMPARTIAL EXAMINATION. AS FOR RESUMPTION OF TRADE, MUJIB HAD BEEN QUITE POSITIVE.

5. SHAUKAT TOLD DCM THAT HE HAD SENT REPORT TO GOP SHORTLY FOLLOWING HIS MEETING WITH MUJIB. GOP HAD RESPONDED WITH MESSAGE LAUDING HIM FOR HIS EFFORT BUT APPARENTLY WITHOUT COMMENTING SPECIFICALLY ON PROPOSALS WHICH SHAUKAT HAD PUT TO MUJIB SUBSTANTIALLY ON HIS OWN INITIATIVE. SINCE RETURNING TO PAKISTAN ABOUT TEN DAYS AGO SHAUKAT HAS BEEN AWAITING A CALL FROM BHUTTO. HE NOW HOPES TO SEE BHUTTO IN ABOUT A WEEK,

WHEN LATTER RETURNS TO ISLAMABAD FROM PRESENT TRAVEL OUTSIDE CAPITAL. MEANWHILE, SHAUKAT HAS LEARNED THAT GOP SENT HIM A SECOND MESSAGE INTENDED TO REACH HIM WHILE STILL IN SOUTHEAST ASIA, INDICATING GENERAL ACCEPTANCE OF HIS PROPOSALS TO MUJIB, AT LEAST IN PRINCIPLE, ALTHOUGH WITH RESERVATIONS OVER MUJIB'S SUGGESTION THAT THE 195 POWS ISSUE AN APOLOGY.

6. AFTER HIS MEETING WITH MUJIB, SHAUKAT CAME AWAY WITH IMPRESSION THAT MUJIB WAS STILL UNPREPARED TO MEET WITH BHUTTO BEFORE GOP RECOGNIZED BDG. HE BELIEVES, HOWEVER, THAT MUJIB WOULD AGREE TO SUCH MEETING ON BASIS OF PRIOR WRITTEN ASSURANCES IN WHICH MUJIB WOULD STATE HIS APPROVAL OF PROPOSALS SUCH AS MADE BY SHAUKAT, AND IN WHICH BHUTTO IN RETURN WOULD STATE HIS INTENTION TO RECOGNIZE BDG. SHAUKAT BELIEVES THAT RECOGNITION AND MEETING COULD BE ARRANGED WITHIN A GIVEN 24-HOUR PERIOD.

7. COMMENT: BHUTTO COMMENTED TO SOBER IN FAREWELL MEETING LAST WEEK THAT SHAUKAT HAD MET MUJIB, BUT BHUTTO OFFERED NO DETAILS OR COMMENT AT THAT TIME. IT IS POSSIBLE THAT SHAUKAT MAY EMBROIDERED HIS DESCRIPTION OF MEETING WITH MUJIB BUT WE KNOW HIM AS HONORABLE AND INTELLIGENT MAN AND ARE INCLINED TO ACCEPT HIS VERSION GENERALLY. IF MUJIB WAS AS RESPONSIVE AS DESCRIBED BY SHAUKAT, AND ESPECIALLY IF MUJIB IS INDEED CONTEMPLATING RELEASE TO PAKISTAN OF THE LAST

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195 POWS, IT MAY PORTEND AN EARLIER MOVE TOWARD SUBSTANTIAL NORMALIZATION IN SUBCONTINENT THAN ALL BUT MOST CONFIRMED OPTIMISTS MAY HAVE ANTICIPATED. BUT WE SHALL HAVE TO SEE.

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